

1**4/9** On the Move.

Acts 8:1-3 Palm Sunday

4/16 Personal Stories

Acts 8:4-8 Easter Sunday

4/23 Simon: On The Wrong Side

Acts 8:9-25 On the Road Again...

4/30 Ethiopian

Acts 8:26-40 Baptism Sunday

PALM SUNDAY ON THE MOVE-AGAIN...

Three passages from God's Holy Word. Each tells us so much about the God we have been singing to and talking about. This God we are addressing today is ALIVE and He is WORKING out His plans on the earth and in our lives. Open your heart to Him today and give Him your full attention!

Jer. 29:11 *"For I know the plans I have for you," declares the LORD, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future."*

John 12:1 Six days before the Passover, Jesus arrived at Bethany, where Lazarus lived, whom Jesus had raised from the dead. ² Here a dinner was given in Jesus' honor. Martha served, while Lazarus was among those reclining at the table with Him... / ⁹ Meanwhile a large crowd of Jews found out that Jesus was there and came, not only because of Him but also to see Lazarus, whom He had raised from the dead. ¹⁰ So the chief priests made plans to kill Lazarus as well, ¹¹ for on account of him many of the Jews were going over to Jesus and putting their faith in Him. ¹² The next day the great crowd that had come for the Feast heard that Jesus was on His way to Jerusalem. ¹³ They took palm branches and went out to meet Him, shouting, "Hosanna!" "Blessed is He who comes in the Name of the Lord!" "Blessed is the King of Israel!" ¹⁴ Jesus found a young donkey and sat upon it, as it is written, ¹⁵ "Do not be afraid, O Daughter of Zion; see, your king is coming, seated on a donkey's colt." ¹⁶ At first His disciples did not understand all this. Only after Jesus was glorified did they realize that these things had been written about Him and that they had done these things to Him. ¹⁷ Now the crowd that was with Him when He called Lazarus from the tomb and raised him from the dead continued to spread the Word. ¹⁸ Many people, because they had heard that He had given this miraculous sign, went out to meet Him.

Acts 8:1~3 "And Saul was there, giving approval to his (Stephen's) death. On that day a great persecution broke out against the church at Jerusalem, and all except the apostles were scattered throughout Judea and Samaria. ² Godly men buried Stephen and mourned deeply for him. ³ But Saul began to destroy the church. Going from house to house, he dragged off men and women and put them in prison.

The first verse speaks of a God who is in a relationship with His creation. Know that God had made all things and everything that was made was indeed made by Him. His fingerprints are all over creation from the tiny cells to the large body of an elephant. You and I were all created by Him and **were made for His Glory.**

This verse speaks of a Personal God who has great plans for us: *plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.* Then verse 12 goes on... *Then you will call upon Me and come and pray to Me, and I will listen to you.*

Are you looking into your own future? What do you see? I am not talking about what you'd want to see, but what in reality do you see? Do you have hope? Do you have a special connection with the future that holds you up? Or is your future darkened with doubt and uncertainty? I'd like to tell you some good news and some bad news. First the bad news: When I look into my future, I can see darkness, doubt and uncertainty as well. I have not received what He has planned for me **as yet.** Like Paul in **Phil 3:12** *Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already been made perfect, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me.* ¹³ *Brothers, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead,* ¹⁴ *I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus.* ¹⁵ *All of us who are mature should take such a view of things. And if on some point you think differently, that too God will make clear*

to you. ¹⁶ *Only let us live up to what we have already attained.* ¹⁷ *Join with others in following my example.*

But as fast as I could tell you the bad news, the Good News is there in front of us! The One who came first has done it all! It has been made complete in Jesus. And as I press on toward the goal to WIN the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus.

See, the prize is connected to Jesus. If you have Jesus in your life, you have the prize. If you have the prize, **YOU HAVE JESUS.**

Now, I understand that there maybe some misunderstanding regarding this. The Prize, or salvation is given to the one who places his/her faith in Jesus. Given to them. Did not deserve it but it is theirs, in Christ Jesus. We walk by faith toward the goal, which is our end at death. **AT THAT POINT, IF WE HAVE RUN THE RACE WELL AND HAVE TRUSTED HIM, the prize of eternal life is then given to me.** Paul said in verse 13, *Brothers, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead,*

Same with you and the same with me. No difference. Me with my papers and you with your history. All come to Jesus on the same level playing ground. We just need to come to Him to 'get it!' Then, it is ours. And when we come, we acknowledge Him as our Lord—but not in a light manner...

The second passage speaks of the day Jesus entered the city of David. He knew that He was going to die there. In **Luke 9:51** *As the time approached for him to be taken up to heaven, Jesus resolutely set out for Jerusalem.* It was why He came to earth. **John 3:16~17** *"For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life. ¹⁷ For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through Him."*

The Jews were there waiting to have the burden of Rome lifted from their necks. For so long now, Rome had been hard on the Hebrew people. They dreamed of a time when God would answer like He did in Egypt & sent a Moses-type to deliver them.

And when they heard that this Jesus was coming to town; the One who had done those wonderful miracles, they were interested in seeing Him. In fact, they lined the road into Jerusalem and broke off palm branches and laid their robes on the ground and welcomed Him into the city with cried of praise to God. Hear what they were shouting? *"Hosanna!" "Blessed is He who comes in the Name of the Lord!" "Blessed is the King of Israel!"* The broken palm branches made the religious leaders nervous. Everything that happened at that time made them nervous but this palm branch was the symbol of the rebellion a few years before. The Maccabees sign was the palm branch. If Rome saw this they would make the connection that this might be a rebellion and they would loose their place of power.

But the people were the ones who saw Jesus' friend come back to life! They were very interested in Jesus. Not in a saving way, in giving their hearts to Him but they were interested in Him. Like a form of *'groupie following.'*

Is that how you follow Him, like He is cool to be around or to hear about but don't want to be TOO close to Him? He demands so much of a person. Really? He is looking for people to follow Him to do what He wants them to do and to say what He wants them to say. He wants people with a passion to follow Him. He is looking for a people who will seek after Him and be willing to be obedient to His call to REALLY follow Him.

And what does that mean? Become a nun or a monk or a missionary or a minister or a full time Christian worker? I hope not because that is not what He looking for. He is looking for a person who seeks after God's heart. That comes in many

different forms: A Mom who loves her family and prays for them. A husband who is honest at work and does not cheat on his wife. A teen who is committed to being holy and pure in his relationship with his girlfriend. A preteen who obeys her parents and honors them with obedience. A senior citizen who helps with the neighborhood clean-up committee and befriends a person who is cranky. Giving a glass of water in Jesus' Name to the Homeless. Getting involved in supporting missions. Writing to a college student and sharing your heart with them.

The father of Modern Mission's, Count Nikolaus Ludwig von Zinzendorf once said *"I have but one passion; it is He, He only."*

Where is your passion? How can that love for what-ever be used for the Glory of God?

John Wesley's motto served him well: *"Do all the good you can, by all the means you can, in all the ways you can, in all the places you can, at all the times you can, to all the people you can, as long as you can."* (Warren, *The Purpose Driven Life*, 259) Let your Faith in God be practical and strong and consistent.

A Pastor/Statesman tells of a Muslim who became a Christian in Africa. Some of his friends asked him, *"Why have you become a Christian?"* He answered, *"Well, its like this... Suppose you were going down the road and suddenly the road forked in two directions, and you didn't know which way to go, and there at the fork in the road were two men, one dead and one alive--which one would you ask which way to go?"* (Warren Webster, April, 1980)

With all the men and women over the years who speak of a Gospel change in their lives, in each case there was an inescapable social implication in their proclamation...The only Gospel worth having has as its necessary fruit and stamp of authenticity a passionate concern for people's needs. (Michael Green, *Evangelism in the Early Church*)

Acts 8:1~3

This third passage gives us the information we need to see that the Word of God will not be stopped. God had told the

Church that once you have received the Power of God, the Holy Spirit, they were to go unto all the world. Well, now they are going! Even with the persecution of the New Church, God's Word is still going to be fulfilled. The Church is growing. People gained boldness to hit the Body hard. Yet there were still men and women willing to give themselves to the teaching and the action of the Faith.

How is your world? Want to help make a difference in someone's life? Thrift Shop at CAJ on Sat, **April 22 @ noon**. Help select and bag pants and shirts for the homeless. **After church on April 23**, help un-tag them and sort them and bag them for delivery on **Sat, April 29 before 8AM** in Shinjuku Chuo-Koen.